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Agenda item 7.3.1

Executive Director Report, August 2025

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Other Federal Updates

Changes and developments about Federal support for libraries have continued since we last met in July. As this situation continues to change, I encourage you to visit the RAILS [IMLS Advocacy](#) Pulse page for the most up to date information we have to share.

On July 30, a federal judge [declined to reinstate](#) Register of Copyrights Shira Perlmutter (who was fired on May 10) saying that she failed to show “irreparable harm”. She has since filed an [emergency motion](#) to keep her position.

A book banning case in Iowa has national interest where book banning provisions included in [Iowa Senate File 496](#) are being challenged in a new [legal brief](#) by a coalition of publishers and authors. The coalition is encouraging the court to uphold a lower court ruling that found the provision unconstitutional. The law was originally blocked by the Eighth Circuit court and has been appealed by the state and is now before the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.

On July 27, a New York federal court [blocked](#) the government’s termination of 1400 NEH research grants to scholars and authors.

On July 31, a bipartisan group of US Senators [rejected cuts](#) to education and libraries including the recommendation of nearly full funding for IMLS and the Department of Education. It would still need support from 60 Senators in the full Senate to pass and the House version, which isn’t due until September, could look very different. If eventually approved by both chambers, the budget would take effect on October 1.

Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the August Public Policy Committee meeting as Ex Officio. ILA confirmed that they have received several legislative proposals that will be discussed by the committee at an in person meeting in Bloomington on August 25. Derek Blaida shared that a deficit is expected for the Illinois state budget in FY27 and that a maintenance budget is a best case scenario for the coming year. Pressures are expected from pension costs, Medicaid cuts, and other federal funding issues including mass transit.

Three bills were signed into law by Governor Pritzker this month.

[HB0042](#) Authorizes libraries to bill nonresident fees on a quarterly or biannual basis. This is effective immediately.

[SB1550](#) Introduced by Secretary Giannoulas, this allows funds to be made available by the state to improve or enhance the security of libraries. This takes effect January 1, 2026.

Illinois Legislative Updates (cont.)

[HB1910](#) Requires that libraries take reasonable steps to have staff trained and available to respond to an opioid overdose, including the administration of an opioid antagonist. Libraries must also receive opioid antagonists from a lawful source. This will take effect January 1, 2026. RAILS has asked Ancel Glink to create a memo outlining frequently asked questions about this new law and will share the finished product with the membership soon.

Casten to Visit Bolingbrook Service Center

Representative Sean Casten (IL-06) visited the RAILS Bolingbrook service center on August 6th to receive a tour of our delivery operation. Rep. Casten was joined by ILA President Carolyn Ciesla and Illinois State Library Director Greg McCormick. After completing the tour led by Director of Facilities and Delivery Mark Hatch, several RAILS staff participated in a conversation with the Congressman to discuss the current state of Illinois libraries and federal funding considerations.

Assists Members in Planning for the Future

Directors University in Bloomington

I had the pleasure of presenting for Directors University on August in Bloomington with my colleague Leslie Bednar, Executive Director of the Illinois Heartland Library System, on the importance of Library Systems 5. Directors University provides crucial learning for new Illinois library directors as they continue their leadership journey. Congratulations to all the new graduates of this year's program! Directors University is presented with support from the Illinois Library Association, the Illinois State Library, the Illinois Heartland Library System, and RAILS.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

RAILS and Partners Receive 2025 ILA Intellectual Freedom Award

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) has awarded the 2025 Intellectual Freedom Award to the Unite Against Book Bans Regional Response Team. The partners on this team include AISLE, CARLI, IHLS, ILA, and RAILS.

Library professionals from across Illinois volunteer their time on the Regional Response Team to actively defend intellectual freedom. The ILA Intellectual Freedom Committee honors these volunteers for their outstanding advocacy and their commitment to supporting librarians facing challenges.

RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek helped launch the initiative and continues to provide strong leadership and support. We're proud of everything this team has accomplished.

[Read ILA's full press release](#) to learn how the Unite Against Book Bans Regional Response Team is making a statewide impact.

Grand Opening Celebrations

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend two Grand Opening celebrations for RAILS members this month. On July 30, I was there for the ribbon cutting of the beautiful new Youth & Teen Services department at the Waukegan Public Library. On August 10, I was fortunate to be at the Plainfield Area Public Library's Grand Reopening and Centennial Celebration. Both libraries have beautiful new spaces that will be gifts to their communities for years to come! Congratulations to all for all of your investment and hard work!

RAILS Staffing and Facilities

Staff Changes at Burr Ridge

July was a busy month for our HR team! We've had a few retirements and people moving positions. Just to keep you in the loop:

- RAILS Executive Assistant Emily Fister retired on July 11
- RAILS Library Resource Specialist Jody Rubel retired on July 18
- RAILS Special Projects Coordinator Stacy Palmisano was promoted to RAILS Executive Assistant on July 14
- RAILS Special Projects Librarian Jessica Barnes left RAILS on August 7
- RAILS Administrative Assistant Mary Kate Murray was promoted to RAILS Special Projects Coordinator on July 16

You may be seeing Jessica Barnes around the library world; she took a position with Explore More Illinois software vendor, Quipu.

I want to say a big thank you to the people who have retired and moved on. Many of these people have been with RAILS for more than five years. Their dedication has resulted in wonderful innovations and service for our members. We also want to congratulate those here at RAILS who are moving into new roles with growing responsibilities. I am confident that they will continue to bring the dedication to service and leadership that RAILS is known for.

Looking Ahead to September

- **September Service of the Month and Board Development topics – RAILS Delivery and the Resource Sharing Map**



This Month at RAILS – July 2025

THE TOP THREE

In response to board member feedback, each month we provide brief talking points to help you spread the word about specific RAILS programs/services. Here are this month's top three:

25 RAILS Libraires Participate in 2025 Directors University

Directors University took place August 6 – 8 in Bloomington, IL. Directors from around the state gathered to get training on the core responsibilities of their role. Monica Harris presented with IHLS Executive Director Leslie Bednar on library systems, and RAILS Director of Consulting & Continuing Education Kate Niehoff presented with IHLS Continuing Education Coordinator Liaison Kate Kite on deadlines and compliance. RAILS member library directors from the following libraries participated:

- Atlanta Public Library District
- Bellwood Public Library
- Broadview Public Library District
- Bushnell Public Library District
- Chadwick Public Library
- Chillicothe Public Library District
- Clinton Township Public Library
- Des Plaines Public Library
- Dixon Public Library
- Farmer City Public Library
- Hanover Township Library
- Lemont Public Library District
- Maywood Public Library District
- Odell Public Library
- Park Forest Public Library
- Peotone Public Library District
- Poplar Creek Public Library District
- Reddick Public Library District
- River Grove Public Library District
- Selby Township Library District
- Streator Public Library
- Sugar Grove Public Library District
- Tremont District Library
- Winfield Public Library
- Woodridge Public Library

RAILS Member Meetup at Illinois College

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva hosted a RAILS Member Meetup at the Schewe Library at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois. This event took place on Tuesday, July 8. It was open to any library staff from any RAILS member library. Seven people attended. The discussion centered around RAILS news and resources.

Find More Illinois Welcomes La Grange Public Library

RAILS is pleased to welcome La Grange Public Library to Find More Illinois. They completed their training on July 21 and are one of the seventy-one public libraries that participates in this resource sharing platform.

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

May RAILS Site Visits

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva conducted five six visits at member libraries in July. She visited:

- Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, IL (pictured, right)
- East Moline Public Library, East Moline, IL
- Galva Public Library District, Galva, IL
- Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center, Kewanee, IL
- National Association of Realtors, Chicago, IL
- Shure, Inc., Niles, IL

To learn more about these visits, see our site visit map, or to request a visit, please visit the [RAILS Library Site Visits page](#).



RAILS Member Event at Homewood School

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva organized a RAILS Member Event at the Churchwood School in Homewood, Illinois on Monday, July 28. This was a half-day event where staff from member libraries came to help weed and organize the collection at a local school library. Six people attended the event. Many of those who attended had connections to the school including a few people whose children attended the school.

Registration Open for Libraries Count: RAILS Data Conference

RAILS and ILA are teaming up to offer Libraries Count, a full day of hands-on data workshops that cover analysis, visualization, storytelling, and more—all tailored specifically for libraries. This event takes place on Monday, October 13, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Ill. This event is an ILA Annual Conference pre-conference event. [Register via the ILA website](#).

Recording *Can't Shelve This* Season 2

The *Can't Shelve This* team – RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki, IHLS School Library Membership Coordinator Leah Gregory, and RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist Ola Gronski - recorded the first three episodes of season two throughout July. The second season premieres on August 12, 2025 with the following episodes coming out on the second Tuesday of every month. Topics for this season include library propaganda we're not falling for, getting connected through professional organizations, and reflections from a first-year school librarian. *Can't Shelve This* is available on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [YouTube](#), and more.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our July social media engagement efforts.

Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power

RAILS members can find information, trial access and pricing on all deals and discounts by logging into the [RAILS Deals & Discounts page](#).

Group Purchases

Much of the early part of July was spent on finalizing and preparing the invoice details for hundreds of libraries participating in the July 1 subscription renewals. The Deals & Discounts team has been actively working with the Finance Team to make sure things go smoothly.

Staffing Transition

With the retirement of long-time staff member Jody Rubel on July 18, the Deals & Discount team worked in July on transition planning, reallocating tasks, and conducting the hiring process for Jody's replacement. The Library Resource Specialists worked together to develop and review a transition plan, including temporary and long-term redistribution of responsibilities, and a timeline of upcoming tasks.

Online High School Programs

RAILS offers two online high school programs for libraries: Career Online High School (implemented Spring 2016) and Gale Excel (implemented Spring 2024). Stats for both programs are listed below:

Career Online High School Stats as of July 31, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
508	267	75	62%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of June 31, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
49	15	32	88%/53%

Seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services

FY24 Box Trucks All Received

On August 8, RAILS took delivery of the final box truck ordered during FY24. This box truck will replace one of our high mileage vehicles from our Bolingbrook facility. We have budgeted to replace two delivery vans at our Rockford facility in the year ahead.

Work collaboratively to identify and support shared catalog solutions and expand resource sharing

Find More Illinois Update

The Find More Illinois team attended the SHAREit virtual conference presented by Auto-Graphics on July 14-17.



Libraries Participating in Find More Illinois as of July 31, 2025

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
1	71	11	1	85

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
June 2025	1,360
Fiscal Year to Date	1,360

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
July 2025	7,289,297

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

RAILS E-Content Specialist Anna Behm met with the team from Baker & Taylor on July 30 to continue the conversation about several services we are considering for eRead Illinois Boundless. These services include a pay-per-circ audiobook collection, a simultaneous use kids' content collection, and a "check print availability" link to be added to Boundless.

**eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts**

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
July 2025	15,725	19,508	35,233
Fiscal Year to Date	15,725	19,508	35,233

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
July 2025	1,599
Fiscal Year to Date	1,599

Explore More Illinois Update

In July 2025, 5,664 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in July 2025 were:

- Morton Arboretum in Lisle (640)
- Brookfield Zoo (499)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (200)
- Cantigny in Wheaton (165)



- DuPage Children’s Museum in Naperville (133)

The most popular Chicago attractions in July 2025 were:

- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry (831)
- Field Museum (666)
- Art Institute of Chicago (600)
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (441)
- Chicago Children’s Museum (323)

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of July 31, 2025

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
353	104	1	4	462

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of July 31, 2025

Attractions	66
Total Attractions in 2025	78

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in July 2025

Organization	July 2025
RAILS/IHLS	1,856
CPL	3,808
Total	5,664

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

CE Highlight of the Month

“Generative AI in Libraries: Ethical Dilemmas and Opportunities” was a standout event that drew high engagement and lively discussion. One of the speakers, a member library board president and one of Time Magazine’s 100 most influential people in AI, brought unique insight and expertise to the conversation. Both speakers skillfully used the abundance of attendee questions to shape their presentation in real time, ensuring the content addressed the topics participants most wanted to explore. The active chat added even more opportunities to connect, share ideas, and deepen learning. “So many of the webinars are just gushing about how great AI is. I really liked that they tackled the more nuanced aspects of AI and really teased apart the pros

and cons and the complexity of the technology. I really appreciate that it was open to our library system. RAILS is just fantastic!" - Decatur Public Library attendee

Recent CE Events

- **"Teaching Tech Skills Without a Computer Lab"**, webinar, July 21
- **"RAILS Learning Lab: Let's Discuss Book Discussions"**, online meeting, July 22
- **"Generative AI In Libraries: Ethical Dilemmas and Opportunities"**, webinar, July 23

Upcoming CE Events

- **"RAILS Learning Lab: Creating Community Through Genealogy and Local History Services,"** online meeting, August 15
RAILS Learning Labs are an informal, online space for interactive, hands-on learning and collaboration. Join in to have fun and connect with other library staff while building new skills. This session will explore how shifting genealogy and local history programming toward contemporary, inclusive approaches can engage hesitant or marginalized patrons, foster shared historical interests, and build stronger, more connected communities.
- **"Family Service Partnerships and Outreach,"** webinar, August 19
Is your library looking for creative ways to better serve families and community partners while making the most of your staff's skills and talents? This webinar offers tips and best practices to help build new collaborations and strengthen existing partnerships with families, organizations, and public officials.
- **"Hiring Better: Building Smarter Recruitment Practices in Your Library"**, webinar, August 20
Explore ways to improve each stage of your hiring process, from defining recruitment needs to onboarding new staff. Learn how to evaluate and update outdated or harmful practices, broaden your applicant pool, and fairly assess candidates. Gain tools to communicate clearly about the process and foster a collaborative, team-based approach to hiring.
- **"From Startups to Libraries: Experimentation as a Catalyst for Change"**, webinar, August 26
As AI and emerging technologies reshape the information landscape, libraries can use experimentation to navigate uncertainty and spark innovation. This program draws on startup techniques to show how design thinking, IDEEA methodology, and user engagement can fuel evidence-based decisions. You'll leave with practical tools to prototype, iterate, learn from failure, and communicate change effectively.
- **"Practical Strategies for Speaking to Power"**, webinar, August 27
This webinar will share practical strategies for engaging positional power with clarity and confidence, from using awareness as a strategic tool to "plating" ideas for productive discussions. Through scenarios and real-world examples, participants will learn to strengthen presence, listen actively, cultivate patience, and position themselves as trusted, solution-oriented leaders.
- **"Reimagining Library Spaces on a Budget"**, Helen Plum Library, September 11
What if small, strategic changes to your library's layout could boost circulation, improve user satisfaction, and make your space work smarter? In this full-day workshop, renowned library space-planning expert David Vinjamuri will share powerful tools from the worlds of retail analytics and consumer behavior research to demonstrate methods that have helped libraries across the country transform their spaces without costly renovations.
- **"In-Person RAILS Learning Lab: Library of Things"**, Alsip-Merrionette Park Library, September 17
RAILS Learning Labs are an informal space for interactive, hands-on learning and collaboration. Join in to have fun and connect with other library staff while building new skills. In this session, get a hands-on walkthrough of the Alsip-Merrionette Park Library's Library of Things collection and explore the strengths and limitations of this collection, go over processing and packaging, and review labeling, storage, and display solutions. You'll also get a look at the templates and guides available for staff.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

August Partnership Meeting

RAILS has monthly meetings with representatives from the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), and the Illinois State Library (ISL) to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries.

August meeting topics included:

- School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) update
- Unite Against Books Bans in Illinois update
- AISLE & ILA Annual Conference updates
- Illinois Association of School Boards conference update
- Illinois School Library Workers Symposium (ISLWS) update

And much more! We will continue to keep the board updated on these meetings.

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

RAILS Rock 'n Roll Playlist

To celebrate National Day of Rock 'n' Roll on July 7, the RAILS staff engagement committee asked RAILS staff to share their number one rock anthem. RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist Ola Gronski built a [YouTube playlist](#) with everyone's picks. The project sparked great conversation both internally on the staff Zoom channels and externally with our members on [social media](#).

RAILS IT Update

In July, the RAILS IT Team posted a public bid for new multifunction copiers and printers. RAILS current copiers/printers are approaching eight years of age. This new bid is to replace our current multifunction printers/copiers. This public bid will be concluded at the end of August. A public bid was also posted for new laptops for RAILS staff. Our current laptops are approaching five years of service and need replacement. The IT Team also continued work on planned server migration. We have not received the servers purchased in July; the expected delivery is September. The team is also planning migration of internet services for the RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center. This planned for Thursday, August 28. There may be some downtime on Thursday, August 28 and Friday, August 29.

Burr Ridge Facility Update

On August 1, technicians from Klein and Hoffman conducted an inspection of the pre-cast wall panels at our Burr Ridge office. Their visit was part of our ongoing efforts to assess the condition of the building's exterior. We are currently awaiting their professional recommendations on any necessary repairs. Further action will be determined based on their findings.

JULY 2025

RAILS
DIGITAL MARKETING
BOARD REPORT



FOLLOWERS

total subscribers

Facebook +22

2,753

Instagram +16

1,669

LinkedIn +51

2,087

REACH

accounts shown our content

Facebook -1,929

5,867

Instagram -18

969

LinkedIn +1,277

3,511

VIEWS

times our content was seen

Facebook +743

28,217

Instagram +2,518

8,359

LinkedIn +2,685

7,437

ENGAGEMENT

reactions, comments, and shares

Facebook +58

1,031

Instagram +79

330

LinkedIn +109

261

TOP POST

received the most engagement



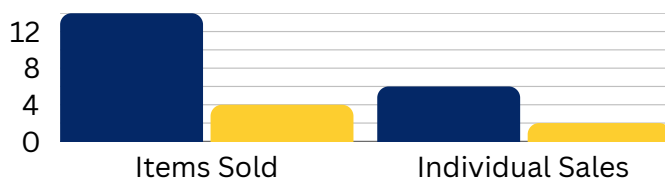
RAILS Online Store



June 2025



July 2025



RAILS Minute Views: 530



Can't Shelve This Listens: 536*

**no new episode in July*